

Written Testimony for the Public Health Committee

March 7, 2022

H.B. 5277 An Act Concerning the Establishment of Technical Standards for Medical Diagnostic Equipment that Promotes Accessibility in Health Care Facilities

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Todd Costello and I live in Ellington, Connecticut. I am a 2nd year medical student at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine. I am testifying in support of proposed HB 5277, An Act Concerning the Establishment of Technical Standards for Medical Diagnostic Equipment that Promotes Accessibility in Health Care Facilities.

One fifth of adults living in Connecticut have disability, and nearly 10% of them have a mobility disability defined as serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs. According to those statistics, more than 55,000 people have mobility disability in our state [1]. People with disabilities are recognized important consumers of healthcare, yet experience significant barriers to equitable healthcare. One of those barriers is the lack of accessible medical diagnostic equipment, including exam tables, chairs, weight scales, patient lifts, and imaging devices, that prevent people with mobility disability from receiving complete, and therefore equal, care [2]. Technical standards for medical diagnostic equipment are set by the U.S. Access Board's accessibility standards issued in 2017 [3].

The lack of accessible diagnostic medical equipment poses unacceptable barriers to patients with disabilities seeking medical care. In the State of Connecticut, high-quality medical care should be equally available to all patients, regardless of ability status. Connecticut should lead the United States in ensuring that all medical facilities have the equipment necessary to provide high quality care to patients with disabilities. Anything less does a major injustice to a significant number of patients in Connecticut.

Over a decade of research unequivocally shows that a large majority of physicians and other healthcare providers nationwide do not use accessible equipment for routine care of patients with significant mobility limitations [2,4,5]. The National Council on Disability released a comprehensive report in 2021 in which they demonstrate that the lack of enforceable medical diagnostic equipment standards allows for continued, widespread discrimination in healthcare for people with

mobility disabilities [2]. Ensuring accessible medical diagnostic equipment is one of the National Council's core tenets in their framework for health care equity released in 2022. The persistence of physical barriers in the healthcare environment contributes to health disparities for people with disabilities. These disparities include higher rates of preventable conditions like diabetes and heart disease and lower rates of cancer screening tests [6-9].

More than 30 years after the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act, healthcare remains inaccessible to people with disabilities, a critical public health issue [2]. If we don't choose to change now, when will we? Connecticut should serve as a role model for health equity and innovation by adopting the U.S. Access Board's accessibility standards and lead the way in improving healthcare access and quality for its disabled citizens.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

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